

Collaboration leads to largest round of Delaware farmland preservation in several years

Media: [2017 Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Program Round 21 Map](#)

[2017 Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Program Round 21 Selection List](#)

DOVER— More than 124,000 acres of Delaware farmland are now permanently preserved for future generations, with 3,039 acres of easements selected into the state's preservation program. This is the 21st consecutive year of easement selections by the Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation. Many of the farms in this round would not have been preserved without matching funds from multiple sources, including the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), New Castle County, and Kent County Levy Court.

"I am proud to announce the largest round of Delaware farmland permanently preserved through the Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Program in the last several years. This is a result of federal funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and funding from both New Castle County and Kent County," said Delaware Secretary of Agriculture Michael Scuse. "I want to thank the state Natural Resources Conservation Service staff, as well as the Washington, D.C. staff in helping us to obtain funding that we haven't had for several years. I also want to thank New Castle County and Kent County for their contributions and commitment to preserving

farmland. It is because of the importance that the General Assembly and the Governor's office have placed on this program and through the cooperation of our partners, that we can make it possible to keep Delaware land in farming."

In this round of easement selections, there were three farms in New Castle County, eighteen in Kent County, and thirteen in Sussex County preserved.

"Farmland preservation is vital to protecting open space while supporting our thriving agricultural economy," New Castle County Executive Matthew Meyer said. "New Castle County is proud to collaborate with the state's farmland preservation program for the first time in five years and to work alongside federal, state, local and nonprofit partners to accomplish this shared goal in the most cost-effective manner. Today's announcement demonstrates the impact we are having together to preserve the most land at the best value for taxpayers."

The Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation approves all applications, using an impartial discounted ranking system that maximizes benefits for taxpayers. The Foundation does not own the land, but rather purchases landowners' development rights and has a permanent agricultural conservation easement placed on the property.

Delaware's statewide program made its first round of easement purchases in 1996, and has since preserved 21 percent of New Castle County farmland, 37 percent of Kent County farmland and 16 percent of Sussex County farmland.

"We are very pleased to once again partner with the Delaware Department of Agriculture in the preservation of significant working farms in Kent County" said County Administrator, Mike Petit de Mange. "This year, our collective efforts will permanently preserve 10 additional farm properties involving over 600 Acres for Agriculture. We see this as a wise investment in the future of our number one industry in Central

Delaware.”

County governments can choose to partner with the state program and add county funds to select properties in their areas, leveraging state resources for the greatest impact. In the round announced today, New Castle County contributed \$194,389 to help purchase development rights on one farm, while Kent County contributed \$101,232 to partially purchase development rights on ten properties.

Delaware also has more than 53,000 acres of farmland in preservation districts, voluntary agreements in which landowners agree to only use their land for agriculture for 10 years. Farmers must enroll in a preservation district before they can sell an easement.

The Foundation’s Board of Trustees includes representatives from agriculture and state agencies. Trustees are: Bob Garey, chairman; Bill Vanderwende, vice-chairman; L. Allen Messick Jr., treasurer; William H. “Chip” Narvel Jr., secretary; Secretary of Agriculture Michael Scuse; State Treasurer Ken Simpler; Secretary of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Shawn Garvin; Peter Martin; Theodore P. Bobola Jr.; Robert Emerson; and Janice Truitt.

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